

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-13 ISO-00 COME-00 L-03 EB-11 OMB-01

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R 140800Z SEP 73
FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4895
INFO AMCONSUL CASABLANCA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 0796

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, GB
SUBJ: PRE-LICENSE CHECK FOR EXPORT LICENSE REQUEST

REF: STATE 180723
LIBREVILLE 780
LONDON 9862

1. EMBASSY HAS MADE INVENTORY OF ALLEGATIONS AND KNOWN FACTS REGARDING ACTIVITIES OF AFFRETAIR AND EMPLOYMENT OF ITS DC-8. IN OUR JUDGEMENT INSUFFICIENT HARD EVIDENCE EXISTS TO JUSTIFY DENIAL OF EXPORT LICENSE FOR SPARES TO FIRM AT THIS TIME. WE RECOMMEND TRANSACTION DESCRIBED STATE REFTEL BE APPROVED.

2. EMBASSY HAS REVIEWED FULL TEXT OF TIMES ARTICLE (LONDON REFTEL). IT DOES CONSTITUTE IMPRESSIVELY COHERENT CHAIN OF ALLEGATIONS. ON OTHER HAND WE HAVE GABONESE ASSURANCES - IN WRITING PRIOR TO DC-8 SALE AND VERBALLY FROM MINISTER OF TRANSPORT ESSONGHE (LIBREVILLE REFTEL) - TO AFFECT DC-8 NOT ENGAGED IN RHODESIAN TRADE.

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3. IN BALANCING FACTORS IN PRECEDING PARAGRAPH AND

IN CONCLUDING THAT TRANSACTION SHOULD BE APPROVED
WE HAVE JUDGED THAT SALE OF SPARE PARTS SHOULD NOT RPT
NOT BE DENIED SOLELY ON BASIS OF A PRESS REPORT
UNSUPPORTED BY OTHER EVIDENCE. IT APPEARS TO US TO
DO SO WOULD MEAN THAT MANY OF OUR INTERNATIONAL
COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS COULD BE JEOPARDIZED OR
UNNECESSARILY DELAYED MERELY BY PRESS SPECULATION.

4. FOREGOING ANALYSIS IS FRANKLY LEGALISTIC BUT WE
BELIEVE ULTIMATELY FAIR. AND HAVING MADE IT EMBASSY
IS FIRST TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT ACTIVITIES OF AFFRETAIR
ARE -PUTTING IT MILDLY - SHADOWY. THE ATMOSPHERE OF
SLOVENLY DISUSE WHICH SURROUNDS LIBREVILLE OFFICE OF
AFFRETAIR IS ENOUGH TO AROUSE ONE'S SUSPICIONS.

5. ACCORDINGLY WE WILL CONTINUE TO PUSH MFA AND
MINISTER OF TRANSPORT ESSONGHE TO PROVIDE WRITTEN
ASSURANCES ON USE OF DC-8. WE HAVE ATTEMPTED
UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR PAST 2 DAYS TO CONTACT ESSONGHE.
BECAUSE HE IS NOT THAT SENIOR A MINISTER AND BECAUSE
FOREIGN MINISTER RAWIRI AND PRESIDENT BONGO ARE OUT
OF COUNTRY, HE AND COLLEAGUES AT MFA MAY BE AVOIDING
OR DELAYING REPLY TO OUR NOTE VERBALE. IN MY NEXT
MEETING WITH ESSONGHE I INTEND IN LEAST THREATENING
MANNER POSSIBLE TO RAISE PROBLEM OF EXPORTING SPARES
IN THE FUTURE IN THE ABSENCE OF FIRM WRITTEN OFFICIAL
ASSURANCES ABOUT USE OF DC-8.

6. WE NOTE THAT REFTEL DOES NOT SPECIFY THAT SPARES
ARE FOR DC-8. WE ASSUME THAT THEY ARE AND THIS IS
REASON FOR COMMERCE'S HESITATION. WERE REQUEST FOR
DC-6 SPARE PARTS, ASSUME PROBLEM WOULD NOT BE AS
CRITICAL BECAUSE NO ALLEGATIONS
HAVE BEEN LINKING DC-6 AIRCRAFT WITH RHODESIAN TRADE.
COUNTRYMAN

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